Nikolai Gogol"s Self-Fashioning in the 1830s: The Postcolonial Perspective

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Source: *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne des Slavistes*, June-September 2009, Vol. 51, No. 2/3, THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF NIKOLAI GOGOL'/MYKOLA HOHOL' (1809-1852) (June-September 2009), pp. 203-221

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

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Yuliya Ilchuk

Nikolai Gogol''s Self-Fashioning in the 1830s: The Postcolonial Perspective

ABSTRACT: This study examines Gogol''s complex self-fashioning during the time of the creation and reception of his Ukrainian tales *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* [Evenings on a Farm near Dikan'ka] (1831–1832) in light of the postcolonial concept of mimicry. Gogol''s self-fashioning is studied through his submission to the symbolic power responsible for branding him as the Other in imperial Russian culture, as well as through his deliberate strategy of mimicry. Not only did Gogol''s marginal social status and his Ukrainian ethnicity create a social hierarchy responsible for fashioning him as "an outsider within" imperial culture, Gogol' himself engaged in the colonial mimicry, trying to reverse the colonial gaze that imagined him as a "sly" Ukrainian. Challenging the accepted view of Gogol' as one who internalized the colonial stereotype of a "sly" Ukrainian, this study treats Gogol''s identity as strategic, positional, and ambivalent. The first part of the study focuses on the manipulation of stereotypes of the Other within the Russian nationalist imagination in the early 1830s; the second part examines Gogol''s ambivalent visual self-representation and social performance that simultaneously mimicked and menaced the colonial authority.

The early years of Gogol''s career were marked by the negotiation of his cultural identity within Russian cultural and social space. This negotiation required continual changing and adjustment of Gogol''s cultural performances and resulted in his representation by imperial society as the Other. Not only did Gogol''s marginal social status and his Ukrainian ethnicity create a social hierarchy responsible for fashioning him as the hybrid who is always "an outsider within" imperial culture, but Gogol' immersed himself in the colonial mimicry, trying to reverse the colonial gaze that imagined him as a "sly" Ukrainian. The theoretical framework of this study is informed by Steven Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning[1] and Homi Bhabha's theoretization of mimicry,[2] which can be effectively applied to Gogol''s complex self-fashioning

[1] In his study *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), the scholar has claimed that "self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile…; self-fashioning always involves some experience of threat, some effacement or undermining, some loss of self…; we may say that self-fashioning occurs at the point of encounter between an authority and an alien, that what is produced in this encounter partakes of both the authority and the alien that is marked for attack." Greenblatt 9.

[2] In a nutshell, mimicry discloses "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite." Mimicry exercises its authority over the colonial Other; however, its ambivalence arises from the fact that the

Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes
Vol. LI, Nos. 2–3, June-September 2009

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during and immediately after the publication of his Ukrainian tales—*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki* [Evenings on a Farm near Dikan'ka] (1831–1832). Both concepts can elucidate how Gogol''s hybrid identity was fashioned as the Other both by its submission to the social power and knowledge of the empire and by his self-conscious strategy of mimicking this power. Throughout this process, Gogol' arose as the mimic man who "passed" as a Russian society man through the adoption of the language, cultural behaviour and dress of imperial culture. However, the very act of mimicking split him as the Other when he consumed and inscribed Russianness upon and within himself. Being a weak copy of the original, the mimic man "becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a "partial presence."[3] Gogol' appropriated the performative identity strategies of mimicry to gain inclusion into the diverse imperial and national spaces of Russia. His hybrid identity was fashioned as the colonial/ethnic Other through discourses and practices of transgression and imposture. Gogol' was quite unique in this hybridization; although many non-Russian migrants participated in a variety of boundary crossings, many of them refashioned themselves, trying to eradicate their ethnic and social difference by adopting imperial disguises.[4]

In contemporary Gogol' studies, the writer's negotiation of his national identity in the 1830s has been usually discussed within the framework of colonial theory, as one that proceeded along the lines of the powerful tradition of *kotliarevshchyna.*[5] Many scholars have emphasized that Gogol' not only continued this tradition by presenting Ukraine in compliance with the imperial paradigm, but also internalized the colonial stereotype of a "sly" Ukrainian by playing the fool through the mask of a simple-hearted Ukrainian narrator Rudy

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colonial subject is always "partial," "incomplete," and "virtual" in its representation. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) 88.

[3] Bhabha 86.

[4] For example, Nestor Kukol'nik, Gogol''s classmate from the Nizhyn Lyceum, presents a more typical case of Romantic self-fashioning. Kukol'nik made the Renaissance Italian poet Torquato Tasso a role model in his literary career. In tune with literary fashion, he often assumed the mask of Tasso, which later won him fame in the top aristocratic salons. The mask of Tasso helped Kukol'nik become accepted into elite Russian literary society, despite his Ukrainian origin and provincial education.

[5] This tradition is a reference to the Ukrainian author Ivan Kotliarevs'kyi who in his travesty of Virgil's *Aeneid* developed a model of Ukrainian identity that allowed the author to mock the imperial center "without direct risk." See George Grabowicz's article "Between Subversion and Self-Assertion: The Role of *Kotliarevshchyna* in Russian-Ukrainian Literary Relations," in *Culture, Nation, and Identity: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounter (1600–1945)*, edited by Andreas Kappeler et al. (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies Press, 2003) 215–228.

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Pan'ko.[6] It has become a commonplace to consider Gogol' sly and dodgy by nature[7] and to think of the mask of Pan'ko as the marketing strategy used by the writer to capitalize on a fashionable literary tradition of the time.[8] Thus, George Luckyj applied Pletnev's characterization of Ukrainians as sly careerists (*prolaza*) to Gogol', arguing that the writer sought "to cash in on the Ukrainian vogue" as most of the other Ukrainian writers of the period.[9] Similarly, Bojanowska has asserted that Gogol' "fully embraced" the classic Russian stereotype of Ukrainians as "sly *malorossy*" by "hiding subversive actions or meanings behind a mask of naïve obtuseness."[10] Myroslav Shkandrij also has characterized Gogol''s oeuvre as one existing harmoniously in the imperial culture, while at the same time emphasizing the unexpected result that *Vechera* had produced. According to the scholar, Gogol''s tales not only pleased Russian elites but also presented a "resistant Ukrainian identity" as a case of "imperial indigestion."[11] Although both Shkandrij and Bojanowska stress that Gogol''s *malorossiistvo* revealed resistant cultural behaviour that provoked the hierarchical imperial structures, their analysis has remained confined by the colonial theory, resulting in the view of Gogol' as the "sly *maloross*." By placing responsibility for legitimization of the colonial stereotype on Gogol' himself, this view is based on essentialism, or the idea that there was something inherent in Gogol''s identity. In contrast to this view, this study treats Gogol''s identity as strategic, positional, and always in process. The writer had escaped identification in terms of "either"/"or" and creatively played out this ambiguity in his self-fashioning.

The task of the present study is twofold. First, it presents the history of the creation and reception of the fictional persona of Rudy Pan'ko as the

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[6] Edyta Bojanowska, *Nikolai Gogol: Between Ukrainian and Russian Nationalism* (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 2007) 206.

[7] This is precisely the argument made by Alexander Zholkovsky, claiming that Gogol' "slavishly adapted to the tastes of his 'superiors' (e.g., [those of] Pushkin)." For further reference see Alexander Zholkovsky, "Reading Gogol's Miswritten Book: Notes on Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends," in *Essays on Gogol: Logos and the Russian Word,* edited by Susan Fusso and Priscilla Meyer (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992) 174.

[8] Compare Victor Erlich, *Gogol* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969); Vladimir Nabokov, *Nikolai Gogol* (Norfolk, Connecticut: New Directions Books, 1944); Vsevolod Setchkarev, *Gogol: His Life and Works* (New York: New York University Press, 1965).

[9] George Luckyj, *Between Gogol' and Shevchenko: Polarity in the Literary Ukraine. 1798–1847* (Munich: W. Fink, 1971) 101.

[10] Bojanowska 77.

[11] Myroslav Shkandrij, *Russia and Ukraine: Literature and the Discourse of Empire from Napoleonic to Postcolonial Times* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001) 108.

Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes
Vol. LI, Nos. 2–3, June-September 2009

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manifestation of both the colonizer's and the colonized's pursuit for "exoticism." [12] It will be demonstrated that Gogol''s ethnicity and class performance was based on manipulating stereotypes of the Other by the Russian nationalist imagination. And second, it studies Gogol''s visual self-representation and social performance as highly ambivalent, that is, as simultaneously mimicking and menacing the colonial authority.

Let us first analyze how Russian society racialized Gogol' as the colonial Other. First, Pavel Svin'in assumed the position of Gogol''s patron when, in 1830, the young author submitted his first tale, "Bisavriuk ili Vechera nakanune Ivana Kupala" [Bisavriuk or the Eve of St. John the Baptist], for publication in Svin'in's magazine *Otechestvennye zapiski* [Annals of the Fatherland]. At the time, Svin'in worked as an editor of *Otechestvennye zapiski*, which welcomed young provincial talents unspoiled by the tastes of Europeanized Russian society. Aiming to present the various sides of imperial life, *Otechestvennye zapiski* published roughly a dozen short stories about the customs of various ethnic groups of the Russian empire over the course of 1826–1830. [13] Gogol''s "Bisavriuk" appeared in the February 1830 issue of the journal. In fact, Svin'in's role in exoticizing Ukraine and Gogol' as the author of the Ukrainian tale is hard to overestimate. Svin'in was one of the first to introduce Gogol' to the Russian audience as the Other. In his foreword to Gogol''s "Bisavriuk," Svin'in presented Gogol' as an exotic Ukrainian author by emphasizing the contrast between the Russian and Ukrainian people:

> *Malorossiiane* [Ukrainians] more than *Velikorossiiane* [Russians] resemble the magnificent Asian people. They look like Asians..., but do not have such an ungovernable character...; their phlegmatic carelessness protects them from blustering emotions, and often the fiery and audacious European intellect sparkles from their bushy eyebrows; ardent love of the Motherland... fills their breasts.[14]

Svin'in's comparison of Ukrainians with Asians was symptomatic of nineteenth-century Russian literature. In the travelogues and literary texts of the 1810s–1830s, Ukraine was generally represented as a "violent and often degenerate place that constitutes the limits of civilization and the boundary with Asia—a zone of dangerous cultural confrontation and mingling." [15] This image of

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[12] As Frantz Fanon argues, "exoticism is one of the forms of this simplification [the determination to objectify, to confine, to imprison, to harden]" that "allows no cultural confrontation." See Frantz Fanon, "Racism and Culture," in *Toward the African Revolution* (New York: Grove Press, 1964) 35.

[13] These include P. M. Kudriashev's tales "Kirgizskii plennik" (1826), "Abdriash, bashkirskaia povest'" (1827), "Darzha, Kalmytskaia povest'" (1829), "Iskak, tatarskaia povest'" (1830), and I. T. Radozhitskii's "Kyz-Brun, cherkesskaia povest'" (1828).

[14] Quoted in Vladimir Zviniatskovskii, *Nikolai Gogol': Tainy natsional'noi dushi* (Kyiv: Likei, 1994) 172. All English translations in the article are mine unless otherwise noted.

[15] Shkandrij 6.

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Ukrainians helped the Russian elite overcome their own sense of inferiority *vis-à-vis* their European peers,[16] allowing them to shape Russian national consciousness against an inferior Other. To this end, Russians developed several stereotypes to establish a hierarchy between themselves as a civilized nation and Ukrainians, who were imagined as either "bucolic rustics" or "anarchic bandits."[17] Another popular colonial stereotype of Ukrainians was "slyness." Russian nobles systematically applied this notion to the Ukrainian petty gentry who had been endowed with the same titles and benefits as the Russian nobility.[18] More than a hundred thousand Ukrainian families obtained noble status, making Russian nobles deeply unsatisfied.[19] They began to use an offensive label *"malorossiiskaia prolaza"* (pushy Little Russians) to characterize the newly fledged nobles.[20] This stereotype was widespread in the circle of literary aristocrats who promoted Gogol' on the literary market. Pletnev, for example, called *"khitrost' i prolaznichestvo"* (slyness and careerism) as one of the defining qualities of Ukrainians.[21] Pushkin, in his poem "Moia rodoslovnaia" [My Genealogy] (1830), also expressed his contempt for Ukrainians who obtained quick promotion in government administration, saying that his grandfather "did not jump from the ranks of *khokhols* to become a prince."[22]

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[16] Andrew Wachtel has claimed that in the beginning of the nineteenth century Russia itself was the colonized because of the weak and derivative nature of its own national culture. "[In] sharp contrast to other politically strong imperializing modern states, Russia found itself in a culturally subordinate, one might even say colonized, position..." Andrew Wachtel, "Translation, Imperialism, and National Self-Definition in Russia," *Public Culture* 11.1 (1999): 50.

[17] Bojanowska 33.

[18] This became possible due to Catherine's II edict "Zhalovannaia gramota dvorianstvu" (1785), which was intended to provide noble status only to those Little Russians who could prove their aristocratic origins in the Polish *szlachta*. But the process of converting into the Russian nobility took years, as was the case with the Gogol's who managed to prove their noble status only at the end of the 1840s.

[19] Stephen Velychenko, "Empire Loyalism and Minority Nationalism in Great Britain and Imperial Russia, 1707 to 1914: Institutions, Law, and Nationality in Scotland and Ukraine," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39.3 (1997): 421.

[20] Stephen Velychenko 421.

[21] Quoted in Vasilii Gippius, *N. V. Gogol': Materialy i issledovaniia*, vol. 1 (Leningrad: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1936) 170.

[22] In general, Pushkin approved of maintaining a differentiation between classes in Russian society and was protective toward the purity of the Russian nobility. He expressed his opinion on this topic on 22 December 1834 at Khitrovo's salon: "Nobility... should be limited and inaccessible [to others—Yu. I.]... If any other class can join nobles, climbing from one rank to another... then soon it will cease to exist..." (*Dnevnik A. S. Pushkina: 1833–1835,* edited by B. L. Modzalevskii et al [Moscow: Izd-

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The role of Russian aristocrats in the colonial self-fashioning of Ukrainian writers can be illustrated by Pushkin's relationship with another Ukrainian poet, Vasilii Tumanskii, which also sheds light on Pushkin's attitude toward the young Gogol'. Tumanskii, like Gogol', arrived in St. Petersburg in the 1820s, seeking a job and recognition in the imperial centre. Fortunately, he met Pushkin, who introduced Tumanskii to Petersburg polite society. Taking a cue from his fellow poet Baratynskii, who at the time had appointed the minor poet Nikolai Konshin as his pageboy, Pushkin consecrated Tumanskii as one of his "vassals." In a letter to his brother (January 1825), Pushkin pejoratively described Tumanskii as "My Konshin" and accused him of filching his verses. In another letter (12 January 1824), Pushkin complained to Aleksandr Bestuzhev that Tumanskii and his brother Andrei were "stealing" from him.[23] Later, in 1831, Pushkin attributed this feature of Tumanskii's character to his Ukrainian origin. In his letter to Pletnev, Pushkin pointed to "plenty of beautiful qualities in Tumanskii's personality despite some peculiarities of his Ukrainian character."[24] Pushkin presented his personal patronage of Tumanskii as the salvaging of a potentially valuable human being from what would have been an otherwise worthless life. A few years later Pushkin used the same logic, characterizing Gogol' as a "sly Little Russian" who had taken advantage of his best ideas for his own plots.[25] Created in Pushkin's circle, the idea of Gogol' "stealing" from Pushkin spread in Russian society and became a powerful myth among Gogol''s contemporaries. In his memoirs of 1841 Annenkov quoted Pushkin as saying that he needed to be "careful with that Little Russian [Gogol']" who "kept fleecing" him.[26] According to the memoirs of Pushkin's sister, the poet complained to his wife Natalia Goncharova that the "sly Little Russian used his

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vo Tri veka, 1997] 24). Pushkin illustrates very well Greenblatt's idea that aristocrats, to a greater degree than members of other classes, have an identity that is so rooted in their rank, so embedded in the structures of their culture, that they are ultimately incapable of turning against it (Greenblatt 9).

[23] See Pushkin's letter to Bestuzhev: "He is a great guy, but I do not like him as a poet... Vasilii does not steal anything except verses, while Andrei steals everything except verses" (Aleksandr Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh,* vol. 10 [Leningrad: Izd-vo "Nauka," 1977] 64).

[24] See Pushkin's letter to Pletnev (31 January 1831) in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 10: 262.

[25] In his "Avtorskaia ispoved'," Gogol' confirmed that the idea of the plot for his comedy *Revizor* [The Inspector General] was suggested by Pushkin.

[26] Annenkov in his recollections presented Pushkin's view regarding the "stealing": "It is known that Gogol' borrowed from Pushkin the idea of *Revizor* and *Mertvye dushi* [Dead Souls], but it is less known that Pushkin gave him his property (*dostoianiie*) [the plots of the above works—Yu. I.] not quite willingly. However, in his family circle, Pushkin said laughing: "I should be careful [dealing] with this *maloross*: he robs me without scruple (*chto i krichat' nel'zia*)." (Vikentii V. Veresaev, *Gogol' v zhizni: sistematicheskii svod podlinnykh svidetel'stv sovremennikov* (Moskva: Moskovskii rabochii, 1990) 179.

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plot."[27] Pushkin's general attitude toward Gogol' in the 1830s was by and large determined by the colonial patronage that allowed Pushkin, as a privileged member of Russian society, to exercise power over the subaltern Gogol'.[28] The myth of Gogol''s depending on Pushkin's promotion was further perpetuated in the mid-1830s, when Gogol' had achieved great popularity and Pushkin, as the older poet, claimed credit for the younger writer's professional success.[29]

Besides Pushkin, Aleksandra Smirnova, a court lady and Gogol''s close friend, also racialized and presented him to Russian society as a stubborn and sly Ukrainian. In her diary and correspondence, she repeatedly referred to herself and to Gogol' as *khokhlachka* and *khokhol*.[30] Smirnova's first encounter with Gogol' occurred in 1830 in the house of Princess Elizaveta Repnina (also known as Warette) when Gogol' was tutoring Repnina's daughter Maria. Complaining that Repnina prevented her from talking to the "shy *khokhol,*" Smirnova presents Gogol' within a framework of colonial proprietorship: "From a distance I saw Warette's *khokhol*."[31] Smirnova's amusement at seeing an "authentic *khokhol*" turns immediately into a desire to "tame" him. Her repeated attempts to

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[27] "My tongue is my enemy. Gogol' is a sly *maloross*; he took advantage of my plot" (Qtd. in Semen Mashinskii, *Gogol' v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov* [Moskva: Gosud. izd. khudozh. literatury, 1952] 630).

[28] Pushkin's associate, Pavel Nashchokin, for example, emphasized Pushkin's patronage: he "set Gogol' up in the world," fostered Gogol''s professional development and promoted him as a writer. Veresaev 179.

[29] According to Sollogub, Pushkin called himself "a god-father" of Gogol''s comedy *Revizor*. Veresaev 178.

[30] George Luckyj's assertion that Gogol' often used "khokhol" (*The Anguish of Mykola Hohol a.k.a. as Nikolai Gogol* [Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1998] 2) does not pass the test by Gogol''s text and correspondence. In fact, Gogol' never used the derogatory *"khokhol"* in his literary texts or his essays and letters. The exception is his famous letter to Smirnova dated 24 December 1844, which he requested be read publicly in Repnina's salon. Here, Gogol' confessed that he could not give preference to his Russian soul over his Ukrainian soul and vise versa. The letter is the only documented example when Gogol' applied "khokhol" to designate himself (Nikolai Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v chetyrnadtsati tomakh,* vol. 12 [Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1937–1952] 418–419). One should take into account that Gogol' used "*kokhlatskaia [dusha]*" [khokhol-like] when answering Smirnova's own question in her letter of 3 November 1844: "Reach to the depth of your soul and ask yourself, are you really a Russian, or are you a *khokhlik*?" (Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 12: 357). Therefore, Gogol''s use of "*khokhol*" should be treated as a "trace of somebody else's word" ("*otgolosok chuzhogo slova*"), to use Bakhtin's formulation, in which Gogol' echoed, or rather mimicked Smirnova's discourse.

[31] Vladimir Shenrok, *A. O. Smirnova i N. V. Gogol' v 1829–1852 godakh* (Petrograd, 1888) 52.

Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes
Vol. LI, Nos. 2–3, June-September 2009

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domesticate a "stubborn *khokhol*" are documented in the diary.[32] The passage quoted below presents the curious discussion that occurred in the 1840s among Smirnova, Ivan Aksakov and Gogol':

> ([Aksakov asks]—Aleksandra Osipovna, tell us how you met Nikolai Vasil'evich.
>
> [Smirnova says]—I am bored with you, Ivan Sergeevich! Leave me alone! I do not remember at all. What does it matter to you?..
>
> [Gogol' says]—Well, listen to me. I was giving a lesson to a lady, a very boring lesson. I am not a good teacher… My poor student was yawning, when Aleksandra Osipovna and the student's sister came and immediately recognized the *khokhol* in me. We [Ukrainians] are twins with Great Russians, but apparently every *khokhol* has a special physiognomy, as well as every Muscovite. Aleksandra Osipovna instantly noticed that the sky of the Northern Palmyra burdens and depresses the *khokhol*. She already knew that P. A. Pletnev welcomed me, and that V. A. Zhukovskii and A. S. Pushkin were favourably disposed towards the *khokhol*. The next day she ordered Pletnev to bring the *khokhol* to her… A. S. Pushkin said: "Aleksandra Osipovna, shelter the *khokhol* and scold him when he becomes depressed," and Vasilii Andreevich mumbled [to me]: "Do you see, brother, that Pletnev was right when he railed at you for your foolishness: you did not want to come and now you are happy that you came and will be grateful that we grabbed and brought you, the *khokhol* [Smirnova].)[33]

At first glance, this account seems to show how Gogol' "played up" to the "domesticating" colonial discourse developed in the circle of Russian literary aristocrats. But one should not ignore that Gogol''s "recollection" in the passage above is double-framed; it is Smirnova's daughter who recorded her mother retelling Gogol''s story of his entrée into the high Petersburg society. Although Smirnova's accounts proved to be a popular source of information about Gogol', her recollection of a conversation that happened about thirty year earlier (the account was written in the 1850s) cannot be literally attributed to the writer's own perception of himself. Furthermore, the ironic tone of Gogol''s indirect speech and the repetition of the word *khokhol* seven times within a short paragraph suggest that Gogol', to an extent, "played up" to the Russian

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[32] See Smirnova's diary in Shenrok, *A. O. Smirnova i N. V. Gogol'*: "Сверчок очень добр, он быстро приручил бедного хохла" [Sverchok [Pushkin's nickname] is very kind, he immediately tamed the poor *khokhol* [Gogol']] (Shenrok 54); "Они так дразнили Гоголя за его дикость и застенчивость, что он наконец перестал стесняться" [They [Pushkin and Zhukovskii] teased Gogol' so much for his wildness and shyness that he eventually stopped being shy] (Shenrok 55); "Великий князь говорил со мной о Гоголе; он прозвал его 'Малоросс, прирученный доньей Соль [Smirnova]'" [The Great Prince [Mikhail] talked with me about Gogol'; he called him a "*maloross* tamed by donna Sol' [Smirnova's nickname]] (Shenrok 84).

[33] Quoted in Shenrok 46–48.

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aristocrats' view of him.[34] Moreover, it points to mechanisms of colonial stereotyping which operates as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always "in place," already known, and something that must be anxiously *repeated.*"[35]

The presentation of Gogol' as the colonial Other by Russian society in 1830–1831 played a crucial role in the development and subsequent reception of the fictional mask of Pan'ko, which in effect was the product of colonial patronage. When scholars inquire into the problem of Gogol''s authorship in *Vechera,* they usually emphasize the pragmatic reasons for Gogol''s concealment of his authorship behind the mask of Pan'ko.[36] One should not forget that Gogol' had already used his real name in the essay "Woman" (published in early 1831), when his *Vechera* had not yet been finished. Therefore, it is likely that, when Gogol' finished the tales in the spring of 1831, he was initially prepared to sign the book with his own name. There are several facts that support this hypothesis. First, the history of the creation of *Vechera* indicates that Gogol' wrote the tales with several unidentified narrators in mind and did not intend to publish them as a separate book until he met Pletnev. The plan to collect the tales in a book appeared before the spring of 1831 when Gogol' began to collaborate with Pletnev's *Literary Gazette* and Delvig's *Northern Flowers*. Second, in March 1831 he requested a large amount of money from his mother to finance the publication of his "*porosia*" (a piglet), which in all likelihood referred to the finalized manuscript of *Vechera*. Finally and most importantly, there is the evidence of Panteleimon Kulish, Gogol''s first biographer, who recorded Pletnev's version of the creation of the fictitious mask for Gogol':

> By May 1831 he [Gogol'] had completed several of the tales that were to form the first volume of *Evenings on a Farm near Dikan'ka.* Not sure how to go about publishing these tales, Gogol' turned to P. A. Pletnev for advice. Pletnev wanted to

[34] Another stereotype about the laziness of Ukrainians became an occasion to ingratiate himself with another of Gogol''s literary idol, the Russian poet Ivan Dmitriev. In his letter to Dmitriev (30 November 1832), Gogol' blamed himself for "laziness" which he attributed to the place of his origin—Ukraine: ("лень..., вывезенная мною из Малороссии") (Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 10: 247).

[35] Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question," in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader,* edited by Padmini Mongia (London, New York, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, 1996) 38.

[36] Stephen Moeller-Sally cites Gogol''s use of pseudonyms as evidence of the anxiety he developed as an author "after the embarrassingly poor reception" of his first work, *Hanz Kuechelgarten* (1829). See Stephen Moeller-Sally, "0000; or, The Sign of the Subject in Gogol's Petersburg," in *Russian Subjects: Empire, Nation and the Culture of the Golden Age,* edited by Monika Greenleaf and Stephen Moeller-Sally (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998) 325–346.

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> shield the young man from the pull of literary parties and to protect him from the preconceived notions of people who had met Gogol' personally or had read his first literary experiments and had not made a favorable impression. For these reasons he advised Gogol' to observe on this first occasion a strict incognito, and he invented for the tales a subtitle that would arouse the public's curiosity. Thus the "Stories" appeared as having been edited by the beekeeper Rudy Pan'ko, who was supposed to live near Dikan'ka, which belonged to Prince Kochubei.[37]

It follows from this account that Gogol' did not initially conceive of the stories within the framework of the fictitious editor Rudy Pan'ko. The title and the mask of Rudy Pan'ko were suggested by Pletnev and served the interests of the "literary aristocrats" (Pushkin, Del'vig, Pletnev and others) who tried to win over the reading public from the so-called "*literaturnye kommersanty*" (literary entrepreneurs) Faddei Bulgarin and Osip Senkovskii. The beginning of the 1830s indicated a rapid decline of the "literary aristocrats'" popularity due to the emergence of middle-class readers. So, Pletnev believed that Gogol's tales oriented toward this new audience could help the literary aristocrats to increase the circulation of their publications and used Gogol''s Rudy Pan'ko to prove that literary aristocrats could also satisfy the tastes of a broader readership. Thus, as the reward for serving the interests of his patron, Gogol' gained access to Russian metropolitan culture.

Yet the result of this mystification was quite unexpected both for the patron, Pletnev, and for the patronized Gogol'. The purely fictional device of Pan'ko extended beyond the text and blurred the boundaries between the fictional identity of Pan'ko and Gogol''s own. The void that emerged between the absent author[38] and the text created space for what Michel Foucault termed as "the author function,"[39] to which Gogol''s readers reductively attributed the features of the text. For about three years (from the publication of Book One in 1832 to the publication of *Mirgorod* in 1835), the actual name of the author of *Vechera* was kept secret, and the reading public metonymically connected the fictional persona of Pan'ko with the real author. More informed readers like Vladimir

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[37] Veresaev 100.

[38] It is important to keep in mind that Rudyi Pan'ko is not the legitimate author of the tales. Only the two Prefaces to Book One and Two and the introductions to "Vecher nakanune Ivana Kupala" and "Ivan Fedorovich Spon'ka i ego tetushka" belong to him.

[39] In his essay "What is an Author?" (1969), Foucault, claiming that an author's name refers not to a concrete real-life person but to literary discourse, announced the authorship a contingent affair and replaced it with the concept of the author-function. The author-function, according to Foucault, is a social construct projected onto the author's verbal products and serving some ideological purpose. It can be also said about Gogol''s Rudyi Pan'ko who circulated in Russian culture as a projection of the imperial quest for the Other. Michele Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews,* translated by D.F. Bouchard and Sh. Simon (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977).

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Odoevskii and Nikolai Iazykov had learned the author's identity through hearsay.[40] Less informed readers, like the minor writer Nikolai Mukhanov, could not guess who was hiding behind the guise of Rudy Pan'ko.[41] Critics who were not initiated into the secret of *Vechera*'s authorship reconstructed the author's identity arbitrarily. Nikolai Polevoi, a rival of Pushkin and other literary aristocrats, thought that the mask of Pan'ko concealed some Russian writer from Pushkin's circle, and called Pan'ko a Muscovite who had never been to Ukraine.[42] Even when the author of *Vechera* revealed himself to the public, the book was still associated not with the real man, Nikolai Gogol', but with the fictitious persona, Rudy Pan'ko.[43]

The critic Vladimir Ushakov in the introduction to his own book *Dosugi invalida* [Invalid's Entertainment, 1832–1835] jocularly asked Pan'ko to "*zasvidetel'stvovat' pochtenie*" (pay his respects) to Ivan Fedorovich Shpon'ka and his aunt, Madam Tsupchevskaia, the characters in "Ivan Fedorovich Shpon'ka and ego tetushka" of Book Two of *Vechera.* Three years after the publication of Gogol''s tales, Odoevskii still attributed the success of the book not to the real author Gogol', but to the "*romanist*" (novelist) Pan'ko, whose simple-hearted personality in the best way corresponded to the spirit of the book.[44] Moreover, popular print books under the name "Rudyi Pan'ko"

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[40] In 1832, Odoevskii wrote to his friend Aleksandr Koshelev: "На сих днях вышли «Вечера на хуторе»—Малороссийские народные сказки. Они, говорят, написаны молодым человеком, по имени *Гоголем*." [The other day, *Evenings on a Farm*—Little Russian folk tales came out. They, as people say, are written by a young man, named Gogol']. Quoted in Aleksei Chicherin, "Neizvestnoe vyskazyvanie V. F. Odoevskogo o Gogole," *Russkaia literatura* 1 (1975): 47.

[41] Mukhanov wrote to his brother: "Здесь вышли две книжоньки, вечера на Хуторе, не знаю кем, которые очень хвалят." [Here (in St. Petersburg) two books came out, *Evenings on a Farm*, (written by) I do not know who, but which are highly praised.] Quoted in E.E. Dmitrieva, "'Pozhiv v takoi tesnoi sviazi s ved'mami i koldunami' (ob osobennostiakh gogolevskogo fol'klorizma: 'Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki')," in *Gogol' i mirovaia kul'tura: Vtorye gogolevskie chteniia,* edited by Vera P.Vikulova (Moscow: Knizhnyi dom "Universitet," 2003) 138.

[42] See Polevoi's review of *Vechera na khutore bliz Dikanki*, vol. 1, in *Moskovskii telegraf* 5 (1831) 91–95.

[43] This can be explained by the act of naming, a powerful device in literary mystifications that serves not so much to conceal but to highlight a writer's biographical legend. As Margaret Russet aptly notes, the authority of the name is enhanced by its position as an object of desire: it "holds the place of a certain lack" and therefore is "perceived as a point of supreme plentitude." Margaret Russett, *Fictions and Fakes: Forging Romantic Authenticity, 1760–1845* (Cambridge, UK, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 162.

[44] Vladimir Odoevskii, "Dve zametki o Gogole," in Gippius 223.

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circulated widely even in the second-half of the nineteenth century.[45] Therefore, Gogol''s public persona, received by a broad audience as Rudyi Pan'ko, became reduced to a kind of object, alienated from the self. The publication of *Vechera* launched the mythopoetic process by which the author's personality was constructed in readers' minds out of the projection of the literary legend.

Russian society not only transposed Gogol''s strategic Otherness from the literary text onto his personality, but also enveloped it in a colonial discourse. The memoirs about Gogol' of 1832–1834 abound with descriptions of the writer's exotic Ukrainian appearance and speech. One of the earliest accounts belongs to Sergei Aksakov who met Gogol' in 1832. Although Aksakov was informed by Mikhail Pogodin of "who Rudyi Pan'ko was," he was shocked at the appearance of Gogol':

> Suddenly Pogodin, without any notice, entered the room accompanied with a stranger, a very young man... and said: "May I introduce you to Nikolai Vasil'evich Gogol'!" The effect was powerful. I became very embarrassed and ran to put on my frock coat, mumbling empty words of trite introduction. At any other time I would not have met Gogol' in this way. All of my guests... were also somehow perplexed and silent.[46]

The reasons for Aksakov's reaction are revealed in the same paragraph: in the eyes of Moscow's aristocracy, Gogol''s appearance[47] and manners[48] corresponded neither with the image of a dandy that Gogol' cultivated as his public persona, nor with the image of Rudyi Pan'ko, the light-hearted Ukrainian. Yet, it is important to stress in Aksakov's account the colonial discourse that "mapped out" Gogol' as the exotic Other. Throughout the reception of *Vechera*, Gogol''s identity was shaped simultaneously as "*svoi*" (ours) and "*inoi*" (alien), becoming a site of both incorporation into, and rejection by, the hierarchical imperial

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[45] Abram Reitblat discusses the remaking of Gogol''s texts, primarily *Vechera* and *Mirgorod*, in *lubochnyi* [popular print] editions in the second half of the nineteenth century. For further reference see his book *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moscow: Izd-vo MPI, 1991). Damiano Rebecchini also presents an interesting account of transformations of the plots of some tales (particularly, "Noch' pered rozhdestvom" and "Strashnaia mest'") produced by anonymous authors for peasant readers. See Damiano Rebecchini, "Kak krest'iane chitali Gogolia: Popytka rekonstruktsii retseptsii," *Novoe literaturnoe obozreniie* 49 (2001): 508–525.

[46] Sergei Aksakov, *Istoriia moego znakomstva s Gogolem* (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1960) 10.

[47] "Gogol''s appearance then was absolutely different and unattractive: a *khokhol* on his head, clean-cut temples, shaven mustaches and chin, big and stiff collar—all imparted a completely different expression to his face. We saw something *khokhol*-like and cunning in it." Aksakov 10.

[48] Aksakov referred to his brother Konstantin's impression of Gogol', who "did not like Gogol''s manners" and to everybody else's opinion that "Gogol' made an unfavorable, unpleasant impression on everyone without exception." Aksakov 11.

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culture. In so far as Russian aristocracy looked for the Other in Gogol', Gogol' himself needed an audience to perform his selfhood. From roughly 1831 to 1834, Gogol''s self-representation and social performance underwent a significant transition from mere reproduction of the cultural code of the *honnête homme* to the visual coding of his Otherness. The visual aspect of Gogol''s self-representation during the early career (1828–1836) offers some insights into how he manipulated his appearance, depending on his artistic and ideological goals.[49]

Let us first consider the role of imperial fashion in Gogol''s own self-fashioning in 1828–1831, i.e., before the publication of *Vechera*. The 18-year-old graduate of a provincial Ukrainian town began to inquire about Petersburg fashion even before his migration to St. Petersburg in 1828. In a letter of 1827 to his older school friend Gerasim Vysotskii, who had moved to the capital earlier, Gogol' asked him about the latest fashion trends and entrusted him to order a frock coat for him.[50] Upon his arrival in St. Petersburg, Gogol' began to smarten himself up with the necessary accoutrements of the Russian dandy: the suit, the hat, a pair of gloves, and the fur collar for his coat. In a letter to his mother of 3 January 1829, Gogol' provided a detailed account of his expenses:

> On the way [to St. Petersburg] I spent more than three hundred rubles, and here I paid two hundred for a suit and pants, one hundred for a hat, and about 80 rubles for a pair of boots and gloves, for a cab and other small but necessary things, and also for the alteration of my overcoat and for the fur-collar to it.[51]

It is evident that Gogol' maintained a great interest in new styles of clothing and used fashion to claim his status as a Russian dandy. At first, Gogol' merely imitated the dress code of Russian dandies, which had changed drastically since the beginning of the nineteenth century. If in the eighteenth century, dress (official or civil) designated a certain social rank and prescribed the proper behaviour, in the 1830s, fashion, as well as everyday behaviour and official

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[49] Gogol''s heightened concern with his visual appearance in these years clearly corresponded to the theatricality of everyday behaviour developed in the Romantic age "as an essentially moral activity, one necessary for social harmony" because "members of society expected to maintain a variety of costumes, properties, personae, and literary styles." For further reference, see William Mills Todd III, "A Russian Ideology," *Stanford Literature Review* 1 (1984): 108.

[50] "May I ask you for a favour: could you order for me a tailcoat at the best tailor in St. Petersburg? Find out how much an excellent custom tailored fashionable tailcoat costs. I am dying to have my tailcoat done by the end of [October] or by 1 November. Write to me, please, about fashionable fabrics suitable for vests and trousers. What colour of tailcoat is fashionable? I would like very much to make a blue one with metal buttons; I have plenty of black tailcoats and I am bored by them" (Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 10: 102–103).

[51] Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 10: 136.

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rituals, was becoming more free and symbolic.[52] The changes in the fashion code liberated imperial gentlemen and made them "personalities," not the functions of their social positions. A new aesthetic of theatricality manifested itself in the 1830s in the proliferation of all kinds of fops, dandies and *flaneurs*. By means of fashion attributes, non-nobles and members of the poor Ukrainian gentry like Gogol' himself, who were downgraded in their noble status when Little Russia became part of the Russian empire, now had the opportunity to demonstrate their membership with one or another social group, without ever belonging to it. *Petits-maîtres* (fops) and *flaneurs* (saunterers) invaded the Russian capital, imposing a new fashion code on the rest of Russian society.

There is no doubt that imperial fashion exerts the power of circumscribing the self; it also confirms the fact that identity is something owned apart from one's self, something that must continuously be "put on" and displayed.[53] As early as 1830, Gogol' began to realize the power of imperial fashion. The motif of the totalizing power of dress for social status appears already in Gogol''s unfinished tale *Strashnyi kaban* [A Terrible Boar] (1830). In this tale, the frock coat metonymically signifies the imperial power that provokes fear and veneration in the locals. The story begins with the description of the uniform of a new teacher, Ivan Osipovich, who arrives from the imperial center in the Ukrainian countryside. The teacher's frock coat serves to establish the hierarchy between the imperial authority and the villagers:

> The frock coat in general (not to mention the blue one), as long as it not made from a gloomy-coloured cloth, produces a stunning effect in villages: whenever it [the frock coat] shows up, hats from the most sluggish heads fall into hands, and imposing faces, armed with black and gray mustaches, reverently bow from the waist to it [the frock coat]. There were three frock coats in the village, including the sexton's chlamys, but our fellow's frock coat outshined all the rest.[54]

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[52] Olga Vainshtein in her comprehensive study of dandyism *Dendi: Moda, literatura, stil' zhizni* (Moscow: Izd-vo "Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie," 2006) has analyzed how English dandy fashion penetrated all ranks of Russian society and became especially popular among Russian nobles released from mandatory state service. As the result of these changes in fashion, the *mundir*, a traditional court dress-coat, was gradually giving way to a fashionable *siurtuk*, a frock coat. Russian intellectuals used this new dress code to express their liberal views: Pushkin, as a titular counselor in government administration, was compelled to wear a *mundir* decorated with galloons inside and outside of court, but he often violated this code by appearing in a frock coat in high society. Ivan Panaev, another Gogol' contemporary, tried to avoid wearing a uniform and came to work in his state department wearing fashionable trousers underneath his official uniform.

[53] Jean Comaroff, "Fashioning the Colonial Subject: The Empire's Old Clothes," in *Of Revelation and Revolution,* vol. 2., edited by Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 220.

[54] Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 3: 265.

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In "Noch' pered Rozhdestvom," the ritual of exchanging indigenous clothes for new imperial dress discloses an important ideological context. At the end of the eighteenth century, when Ukrainian gentry (formed mostly from the former Cossack military elite) were granted equality with Russian aristocrats, they were subject not only to political subordination but also to the dress code of the Russian nobility.[55] In the tale, this symbolic changing of clothes is played out in the episode when Cossacks, preparing to meet with the tsarina, order Vakula to change his peasant-like dress into the appropriate court attire: "Put on cloths of the type we are wearing."[56] Once Vakula is dressed in court attire, he wants to show off his proficiency in the *gramotnyi iazyk*, i.e., Russian, but, in fact, he "corrupts" it with incorrect forms.[57] At the same time, the Cossacks, who also dressed in court attire, demonstrate their defiance of the imperial language. While speaking with the empress, the Cossacks intentionally intersperse their discourses with Ukrainian phrases,[58] which perplexes Vakula[59] and incurs Count

[55] The tensions between the self-assertion of the Ukrainian gentry and their obedience to the imperial dress code are thoroughly analyzed by the Ukrainian scholar Tamara Hundorova in her recent book *Kitch i literatura: Travestii* (Kyiv: Fakt, 2008).

[56] Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 234.

[57] "Что ж, земляк»,—сказал приосанясь запорожец и желая показать, что он может говорить и по-русски. «*Што, балшой город*?» Кузнец и себе не хотел осрамиться и показаться новичком, притом же, как имели случай видеть выше сего, он знал и сам грамотный язык. «*Губерния* знатная!» отвечал он равнодушно: «нечего сказать, *домы балшущие*, картины висят *скрозь* важные. Многие *домы* исписаны буквами из сусального золота до чрезвычайности. Нечего сказать, чудная пропорция!" [emphasis added] (Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 233–234). ["'Now then, our fellow-countryman', said the Cossack, drawing himself up and showing off his knowledge of the Russian tongue, 'Big city, aren't it?' The blacksmith did not want to show himself up as a complete greenhorn, and anyway, as we have already had occasion to see, he too could turn a pretty phrase. 'It's a splendid precinct!' he replied in a nonchalant manner. 'There's no denying it: the houses are mighty big, you see some decent pictures hanging in them. Many of the houses are excessively adorned with letters of gold leaf. But there's no gainsaying it; the proportion is marvelous!'"] English translation taken from: Nikolai Gogol, *Village Evenings near Dikanka* and *Mirgorod*, translated by Christopher English (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 131.

[58] Count Potemkin asks the Cossacks in Russian: "Все ли вы здесь?" The Cossacks reply in Ukrainian: "*Та вси, батьку!*" (Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 235). Similarly, in the scene with the Empress Catherine they speak Ukrainian ("Та спасиби, мамо!"; "Як же, мамо!" [Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 236, 238]) or use Ukrainian forms (e.g., the vocative case, which is absent in Russian) when speaking Russian ("ведь человеку [In Ukrainian "cholovik" refers to a gendered man and a husband, while in Russian it is genderless, meaning 'a human being'] сама знаешь, без жинки нельзя жить" [Man cannot do without a wife] [Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 238]).

[59] Listening to the Cossacks occasionally using Ukrainian phrases makes Vakula wonder why "этот запорожец, зная так хорошо грамотный язык, говорит с царицею, как

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Potemkin's displeasure.[60] The hybrid language of Vakula and the Cossacks mimics the imperial discursive conventions: by pretending to "fit in" with the imperial authority, the Ukrainian characters in fact turn against its forms and structures.

Likewise, Gogol', by fashioning himself as a member of polite society, did more than merely copy the colonizing culture, its behaviour, manners and values; he created a "blurred copy" of a Russian society man, which ultimately mimics and mocks the colonial authority. Gogol''s self-fashioning right after the publication of *Vechera* was aimed at making himself visible and disclosed his engagement in colonial mimicry. This was manifested in two aspects of Gogol''s self-representation: his ambivalent hairstyle and his provocative behaviour in St. Petersburg salons. It was not by chance that around 1832—the year of the publication of Book 2 of *Vechera,* which secured for Gogol' the reputation of an entertaining, sly Ukrainian author—a curious detail appeared in Gogol''s appearance: a tuft of hair elevated over his forehead, which Gogol''s contemporaries unanimously labeled the "*khokhol.*"[61] This detail figured in the descriptions of Gogol''s appearance, captured by Mikhail Longinov,[62] Pavel Annenkov,[63] and Sergei Aksakov.[64] The *khokhol* was perceived as something exotic, a deviation from what was perceived as the "norm" in Russian society. It was also the pernicious mark of Ukrainian Otherness and a signifier of negative values rooted in the empire's racist social practices. It is especially evident in Aksakov's recollection where the *khokhol* is used both in its direct meaning and metonymically in tune with the common imperial naming of Ukrainians.

будто нарочно, самым грубым, обыкновенно называемым мужицким наречием. 'Хитрый народ!' подумал он сам себе: 'верно, не даром он это делает'" [The blacksmith was amazed to hear this Cossack, who could speak such good, correct Russian, talking to the tsarina in the most uncouth language, just like peasant. 'The wily fox!' he thought to himself, 'I bet he has a special reason for doing that.']. Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 238.

[60] Potemkin remarks to himself during the Cossacks' meeting with the empress that they "say not at all what he taught them" ("говорят совершенно не то, чему он их учил"). Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 1: 236.

[61] The direct meaning of *khokhol* designates a long lock of hair left on top or on the front of an otherwise clean-shaven or shortly cut hairstyle—a hairstyle that was widely employed by Ukrainian Cossacks. From the eighteenth century forward, the word *khokhol* has been used metonymically for any inhabitant of Ukraine and gradually acquired a pejorative connotation.

[62] Longinov recalled a "*khokholok"* on the top of Gogol''s head in 1832 when the writer was tutoring him. Veresaev 118.

[63] Annenkov mentioned "the tall, curled and whipped up tuft of hair" on Gogol''s forehead, making him look like a rooster. Veresaev 141.

[64] Aksakov retrospectively recorded his impression after his first meeting with Gogol' in 1832, emphasizing the *khokhol* in Gogol''s appearance. Aksakov 10.

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Richard Gregg has asserted that Gogol', by fashioning his *khokhol* or "quiff," made a statement about his ethnic allegiance.[65] It is hard, however, to establish affinity between Gogol''s haircut and the traditional haircuts of Ukrainian Cossacks, as well as to claim that his quiff was his conscious strategy of an ethnic disguise.[66] Gogol''s *khokhol* was rather a discursive construct that cropped up in memoirs of his acquaintances in the 1840s–1850s, when Russian society became extremely preoccupied with the question of Gogol''s allegiance to Russian national identity. The *khokhol* betrayed the fantasy of imperial society about cunning Ukrainians who only pretend to be loyal imperial subjects. Russian society reconstructed Gogol''s appearance along recognizable "bodily" lines: thanks to his ambiguous haircut Gogol' was claimed to look and act as an eccentric Ukrainian.

Gogol''s urge to fashion himself on the edge, however, was evident only in the first half of the 1830s. Neither in the years preceding the publication of *Vechera* nor in the 1840s did Gogol' have such a culturally ambiguous hairdo. His classmates depicted the young Gogol' of the 1820s with his hair plastered closely to his head,[67] while already in 1836 Vera Nashchokina recalled Gogol' wearing a *skobka*, a kind of long bob, which was traditional for Russian peasants (and which in the 1830s had become very popular among Slavophiles).[68] In 1842, Longinov, who ten years earlier was impressed with Gogol''s exotic haircut,[69] hardly recognized Gogol' who now sported a haircut "a la *muzhik*."[70] In the portraits of Gogol' from the 1840s (for instance, by Fyodor Moller), his appearance lacks any provocative detail; he is dressed in the black frock coat traditional for Russian intellectuals and has a mustache and longer hair. At that time, Gogol''s appearance and fashion resembled that of the Russian Slavophiles, particularly that of the brothers Aksakov, Shevyrev, Pogodin and others, with whom the writer began to share ideas concerning a renewal of Russian national

[65] Richard Gregg, "The Writer and His Quiff: How Young Gogol' Sought To Shape His Public Image," *Russian Review* 63.1 (2004): 63–69.

[66] A portraits of the Russian poet Evgenii Baratynskii (made by Sheval'e in the 1820s) and of Gogol''s Ukrainian friend Mykhailo Maksymovych captured them wearing very similar haircuts, reminiscent of the one Gogol' had in the portrait painted by Aleksandr Venetsianov in 1834 (Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* 2: 3).

[67] See, for example, recollections of Gogol''s teacher Ivan Kul'zhynskii (Veresaev 76) and classmate Vasilii Liubich-Romanovich (Veresaev 79).

[68] Nashchokina wrote retrospectively about Gogol''s appearance at their first meeting in 1836: "[Гоголь] носил довольно длинные волосы, остриженные в скобку, и часто встряхивал головой" [[Gogol'] was wearing long *skobka* hair cut [a hairstyle similar to a bob—Yu. I.] and often tossed his head"]. Veresaev 175.

[69] Veresaev 118.

[70] Veresaev 339.

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identity.[71] Therefore, only in the early 1830s did Gogol' have an ambiguous haircut that differentiated him from the rest of the Russian literary elite.

The ambivalence and marginality of Gogol''s position in Russian society was conditioned not only by his exotic fashion and hairstyle, but also by his eccentric verbal behaviour and by his masterful oral performance of his stories, plays, and anecdotes. As William Mills Todd III asserts, Gogol' remained a misfit in polite society because he did not take part in the free-flowing exchange of repartee, gossip, and light verse.[72] Moreover, Gogol' consciously intensified his marginality by demonstrating his inability to master social graces, particularly society "talk." There are many records of Gogol''s contemporaries who were shocked by his oral anecdotes, which were often considered too spicy for a society man. Efim Kurganov has thoroughly examined Gogol''s oral novellas and anecdotes, which often were inappropriate in polite society and worked to "demolish" its expectations.[73] Gogol''s repertoire of oral anecdotes consisted of both Ukrainian[74] and international[75] sources that the writer creatively reworked every time to fit the situation. Many Gogol' contemporaries pointed to the fact that Gogol''s oral stories were "unique, but sometimes not entirely in good taste,"[76] "almost always quite obscene,"[77] and "never fit to print." It should be noted, however, that spicy anecdotes were in fashion among salons attendee at that time, and obviously Gogol' imitated his older fellow poets, particularly Zhukovskii, in his provocations of "good taste." The difference between Zhukovskii's and Gogol''s oral performances resided first of all in the

[71] Part of their ideological program was to heal the breach between the elite and the peasantry, and to this end Slavophiles proposed that the elite dress in less fashionable attire. Konstantin Aksakov, for example, wore a traditional Russian dress in salons in order to demonstrate his rejection of westernization and his solidarity with the people. For further reference see Christine Ruane, "Subjects into Citizens: The Politics of Clothing in Imperial Russia," in *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship,* edited by Wendy Parkins (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2002) 49–70.

[72] William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986) 172–173.

[73] Efim Kurganov, "Gogol as a Narrator of Anecdotes," in *Reflective Laughter: Aspects of Humor in Russian Culture,* edited by Lesley Milne (London: Anthem Press, 2004) 27.

[74] Ivan Panaev mentioned how "Gogol''s *Malorussian* oral tales... made a strong impression on Belinskii" in Mashinskii 218. Sergei Aksakov attributed the originality of Gogol''s anecdotes to the peculiarities of his Ukrainian mentality ("iskliuchitel'no osobennost' malorossov"). See Veresaev 134.

[75] See, for example, a variation of Gogol''s anecdote about Khodzha Nasreddin, which was recorded by Vladimir Sollogub. For further reference see Vladimir Sollogub, *Povesti: Vospominaniia* (Leningrad: "Khudozhestvennaia literatura," 1988) 551–552.

[76] See A. F. Afanas'ev's recollection in Veresaev 238.

[77] See Fedor Chizhov's memoirs in Veresaev 353.

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extensiveness of the repertoire[78] and in an inimitable natural tone of the latter.[79] Yet, Gogol''s obscene jokes and anecdotes were tolerated not because he managed to shock society in an unexpected way,[80] but because Gogol' was accepted into Russian high society as a Ukrainian jester ("*malorossiiskii zhartovnik*" as defined by Osip Senkovskii), and, therefore, as such he was "allowed" to transgress and was excused for jokes that other members of society would have been censured.[81] Gogol' deliberately subverted the requirements imposed upon the *honnête homme*. In a sense, Gogol' became a burlesque version of the *honnête homme* that strove to participate in polite society by simultaneously imitating and ridiculing its codes. This deliberate self-fashioning and social behaviour was a signifier of colonial mimicry. "Almost the same, but not quite," Gogol' took advantage of the ambivalence of his position to transform mimicry of the imperial center into its mockery and thereby to undermine its control over his self-fashioning.

In conclusion, it is necessary to point out that although conceived as a project of legitimizing the imperial stereotypes about Ukrainians, Gogol's self-fashioning proceeded along the lines of colonial mimicry. Gogol mimicked and mocked not only the values, attitudes and cultural codes of the hierarchical imperial society, but also the expectations of that society that a Russianized Ukrainian would play up to its colonial stereotypes. By creating a virtual copy of a Russian society man, Gogol' not only asserted his ethnic and cultural difference but also subverted the project of "domesticating" the Other.

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[78] As Kurganov claims, Zhukovskii "offered his listeners always the same repertoire of stories and they knew what to expect," whereas Gogol' "always took his listeners unawares, Gogol' "employed a more subtle and calculated strategy than Zhukovsky" in his oral performances. Kurganov 30.

[79] See, for example, Gogol''s anecdote about a brothel, which he related to a stern lady Louisa Karlovna Vielgorskaia, neé Princess Biron, pretending it to be in unison with a serious conversation on a spiritual-mythical topic. The whole situation is recorded in Sollogub 441–442.

[80] Kurganov 30.

[81] Compare, for example, the reaction of high society to Odoevskii's and to Gogol''s indecent anecdotes, as recorded by Sollogub: "[Odoevskii] was distinguished by the peculiarity that he told ladies the most indecent things in the most innocent way, completely sincerely and without any ulterior motive. In this sense, he was not at all like Gogol', who had the gift of narrating the most salacious anecdotes, without provoking anger from his female listeners, whereas poor Odoevskii was angrily cut short, Gogol', meanwhile, always transgressed deliberately." Sollogub 441–442.

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